



Mercy Primary School
Child Safeguarding Policy

September 2015

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Child Safeguarding Policy

The governors and staff of Mercy Primary School recognise the contribution we make to the safeguarding of our children. We recognise that all staff, including volunteers, have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the children in our charge, and we will carry out this duty through our Pastoral Care Policy, which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. In addition to promoting this caring environment we aim to protect our pupils by helping them learn about the risks of possible abuse, helping them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks. The staff in our school has also adopted the Code of Conduct for our behaviour towards pupils. (See Code of Conduct policy)

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school - teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers, have clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child, and the welfare of each child is our paramount consideration. **The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school**, and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence. This policy is fully in compliance with the Department of Education guidance provided in 'Pastoral Care in Schools- Child Protection.'(99/10)

THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM IN MERCY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Principal: Mrs E. Loughran

Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mrs S Hunt

Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Mr G Trainor

Chair of Governors: Mr B Feeney

What is child abuse?

The Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures document defines abuse as follows:

'Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institution or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger.' (ACPC, 2005) There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour. (ACPC 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms include:

- Unexplained bruises(in places difficult to mark)
- Human bite marks, welts or bald spots
- Unexplained cuts, fractures or abrasions
- Untreated injuries
- Chronic runaway
- Fear of going home

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that she is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as she meets the needs of another person. It may involve causing a child frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse. (ACPC 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms include:

- Bullying others
- Change in personality from outgoing to withdrawn

- Difficulty in forming/maintaining relationships
- Depression
- Attention seeking
- Chronic runaway
- Self- harm
- Wetting/soiling
- Sudden speech disorders
- Low self-esteem

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. These activities may involve physical contact. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at or in the production of pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.(ACPC 2005)

Possible signs or symptoms;

- Bruised or sore genitals
- Genital infections
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Inappropriate sexualised language or behaviour
- Low self-esteem
- Chronic depression
- Substance abuse
- Personality changes
- Fear of going home

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).(ACPC 2005)

Signs or symptoms include:

- Poor hygiene
- Constant hunger/cramming food
- Inadequate/inappropriate clothing
- Constant tiredness
- Exposed to danger/lack of adequate supervision

- Untreated illness
- Lack of peer relationships
- Compulsive stealing/begging

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

Procedures for suspected (or disclosed) child abuse:

The designated teacher for Child Protection is Mrs Hunt. In her absence

Mr Trainor, deputy designated teacher, will assume responsibility for Child Protection matters.

1. If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff, which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, the member of staff must act promptly. If a disclosure is made to a classroom assistant in the classroom, she/he should inform the class teacher that a child safeguarding issue has occurred and that the assistant needs to report this to the Designated teacher immediately.

He/she should not investigate any disclosure- this is a matter for Social Services - but should report these concerns immediately to the Designated Teacher, who will discuss the matter with her/him and make full notes.

2. The designated teacher will consult with the Principal and a course of action will be decided. The Designated teacher will ensure a written record is made.

The Principal in consultation with the Designated Teacher will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The Designated Teacher may seek clarification or advice from the CCMS Designated Child Protection Officer, the BELB Designated Officer or a Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest and paramount consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is our first priority.

When a decision is made to refer to Social Services, the referral is made by:

- (a) Completion of a UNOCINI form where help is needed but is not urgent
(Child in Need).
- (b) A telephone call to the Gateway Team of Social Services (90507000) followed by a UNOCINI form, where there may be significant risk.
(Child Protection)

A copy of each UNOCINI referral is then forwarded to the Designated Officer for Child Protection at the BELB.

3. If a complaint about possible abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal
(or the Vice-Principal if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Designated Teacher). Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils, and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the Vice-Principal, must be informed immediately. He will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken. {See following Flow Chart Appendix 1}

If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do if he/she has concerns about a child or is unsure about being able to recognise signs or symptoms of possible abuse, he/she should speak to the Designated Teacher. The teacher should complete a 'Record of Concern' sheet and give a copy to Mrs Hunt. The matter can be discussed and a record kept.

How to respond if a child makes a disclosure to you.

1. Receive

- Stay calm
- Listen to child without displaying shock or disbelief
- Accept what is said
- Be discreet

2. Reassure

- Reassure child and do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that you will have to speak to Mrs Hunt, who will know what to do next.
- Reassure and alleviate guilt if the child refers to it

3. Respond

- Respond to the child only as far as is necessary to establish if the matter needs to be passed to the Designated Teacher.
- Do not question the child
- Do not criticise the perpetrator
- Do explain what you will do next.

4. Record

- Make notes if possible
- Record date, time, place, people present, note injuries or marks
- Sign record and give to designated teacher.

5. Refer

- Concerns about possible abuse must be referred to the designated teacher as soon as possible within the working day. She will liaise with the Principal in the decision making process regarding possible referral to statutory services.

Confidentiality

It should be recognised that information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. If a child confides in a member of staff or a volunteer it is important that the child is told sensitively that it may be necessary to share the information with those who need to know about it and explain to the child that it is important to ensure the child's safekeeping. In the interests of the child, staff may need to

share this information with other professionals. However only those who need to know will be told.. All staff and volunteers who receive sensitive information about children or parents in the course of their professional duties should be aware that such information is confidential and should not be made the subject of general conversation. Such information should never be disclosed to others outside of school, other than to statutory officials, as required by this policy.

Access to all safeguarding records are held securely in school and access is restricted to the Principal, Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

We do respect the right of a family to privacy and dignity will be respected at all times.

Bullying

Bullying is a distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Parents of both victim and bully will be personally contacted immediately if bullying behaviour is identified. The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum defines bullying as follows:

'The repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.'

As outlined in our Anti Bullying Policy, (currently under review) our procedures to deal with bullying are as follows:

Any complaint by a parent that their child is, or may be, being bullied, will be fully investigated and dealt with by the class teacher. The victim will be listened to and the incident investigated. Serious cases of bullying will be referred immediately to the Principal, Mrs Loughran for investigation. Team action, involving the Principal, Vice-Principal, Senior Management team, class teachers, classroom assistants and lunchtime supervisors as appropriate, will work in partnership to protect the victim. This will usually include ensuring that another child or small group of children befriends and supports the child being bullied during the school day.

A home-school diary may be used, which will help the child record feeling or incidents.

A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response from the Principal or designated teacher within one week of making the complaint, outlining the investigation which has been carried out and the action being taken.

The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of any privileges or position of responsibility she holds in the school. Her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped.

If serious bullying behaviour were to persist, then the next stage would be to instigate the child protection procedures as described in the previous section.

Domestic Violence

We all need to be aware of the effects of domestic violence on family members.

Domestic abuse is defined as:

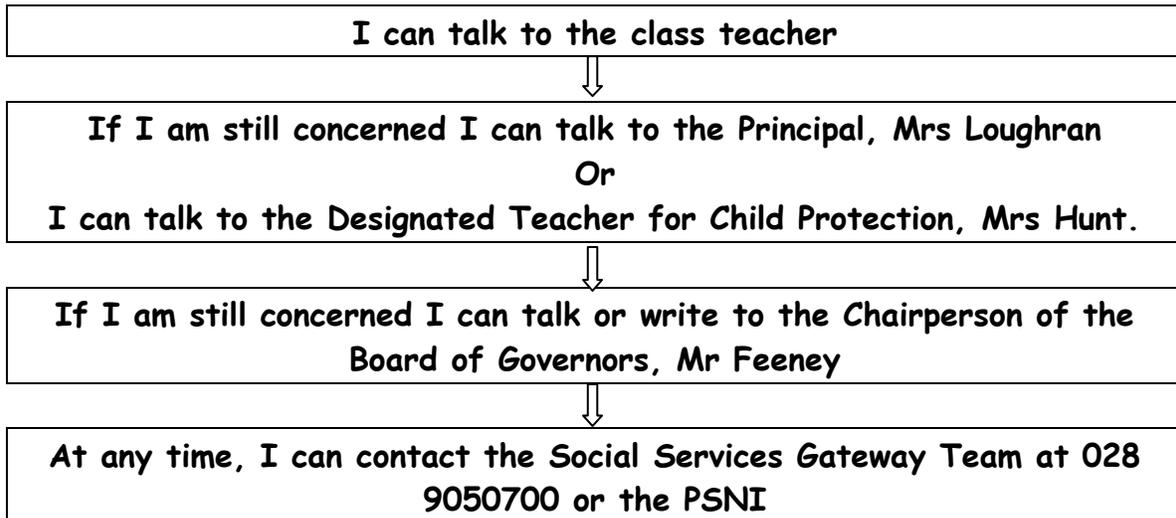
'threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted by one person by another whether they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.'

DHSSPS/NIO Tackling Violence at Home, 2005 p 10.(Mrs Hunt has a copy of the whole document or it can be accessed online)

How parents can make a complaint

If a parent has a concern about the safety of their or another child they can follow the following procedures:

I have a concern about my/a child's safety



Safeguarding

Safeguarding involves more than Child Protection. It involves many aspects of life in school, including:

- Highlighting safeguarding issues
- Regular whole staff training in safeguarding matters,
- Informing children where they can seek help and who the designated teacher and deputy designated teacher are,
- Ensuring security in school is maintained,
- Carrying out risk assessments for trips,
- Keeping up to date on other risks, eg social media.
- Ensuring the safeguarding of children is embedded in the school curriculum.

Child Protection Training

All staff employed in Mercy Primary, including teaching, secretarial, ancillary and supervisory staff receive Child Protection Training every two years.

Additional Policies relevant to Child Protection

Many aspects of school life involve aspects of Child Protection. The following Policies contain elements pertaining to Child Protection issues:

- Intimate Care Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Drug Policy
- Bullying Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- ICT Policy
- Reasonable Force Policy.

Reviewing the Child Safeguarding Policy

The Safeguarding team in Mercy Primary school will review this policy annually, or in the event of an incident or change in legislation. Any necessary changes will be made.

School Security

The school has set in place procedures to help with Child Protection. These arrangements are continually under review. The current procedures include:

- Restricted entrance to school during school hours
- All visitors to report to reception, where they sign in
- Parents collecting children early have to sign and state reason
- Volunteers are vetted
- Adults working with children are subject to background checks.

Conclusion

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and

young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

In all circumstances, the professional judgement of staff will be exercised and for the vast majority of members of staff, this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice. If members of staff have any doubts about points about this code of practice or how they should act in particular circumstances they should consult the Designated Teacher, a member of the Senior Management Team, Vice-Principal or Principal or representative of their professional organisation.

From time to time it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young people and their manner and approach to individual children/young people, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of children/young people or of their parents/guardians.

We in Mercy Primary School aim to work together in partnership with parents. In addition to working with parents on an ongoing basis, all parents will be sent a copy of the Pastoral Care Policy Summary every two years. This document summarises the matters pertaining to Child Protection issues. It also advises parents on how to make a complaint. Parents may request copies of the complete policies at any time.

Remember;

CHILD SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

